

CLAIMS

1. A method of packaging travel services for a customer comprising the steps of:
 - defining a travel package profile;
 - communicating with a plurality of travel service providers, wherein each of said plurality of providers is associated with one or more travel service inventories;
 - identifying a plurality of travel services available from said travel service inventories;
 - selecting two or more travel services from said plurality of travel services in accordance with said travel package profile; and
 - presenting said two or more selected travel services as a travel package to said customer.
2. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of travel services includes one or more of the following: transportation services; lodging services; recreational services, and entertainment services.
3. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, wherein said step of communicating with a plurality of travel service providers is performed via an open-standard distributed computer network.
4. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, wherein said step of defining a travel package profile further comprises the steps of:
 - identifying one or more relevant customer travel preferences;
 - and
 - including said customer travel preferences in said travel package profile.

5. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 4, wherein said step of identifying one or more relevant customer travel preferences further comprises the steps of:
 - receiving a customer request including a plurality of customer travel preferences; and
 - selecting said one or more relevant customer travel preferences from said plurality of received customer travel preferences.
6. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 4, wherein said step of identifying one or more relevant customer travel preferences further comprises the steps of:
 - accessing a database containing a plurality of customer preferences compiled in connection with one or more previous transactions with said customer; and
 - selecting said one or more relevant customer travel preferences from said plurality of customer travel preferences.
7. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, wherein said step of defining a travel package profile further comprises the steps of:
 - identifying one or more marketing campaign parameters; and
 - including said marketing campaign parameters in said travel package profile.
8. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, wherein said step of presenting said two or more selected travel services as a custom travel package to said customer further comprises the step of:
 - creating a custom email message containing a description of said custom travel package;
 - transmitting said custom email message to said customer.
9. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

receiving a request from said customer via a travel service request web page; and

wherein said step of presenting said two or more selected travel services as a custom travel package to said customer includes:

creating a custom web page containing a description of said custom travel package; and
transmitting said custom web page to said customer.

10. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

maintaining an offering repository of one or more of said travel service inventories associated with said plurality of travel service providers;

periodically receiving travel service inventory updates from one or more of said plurality of travel service providers; and

updating said offering repository in accordance with said travel service inventory updates.

11. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

receiving a plurality of travel service rules from one or more of said plurality of travel service providers; and

wherein said step of selecting two or more travel services includes applying said travel service rules to ensure that said selected travel services form a valid custom travel package.

12. A method of packaging travel services according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving an order for said custom travel package from said customer; and

reserving said selected two or more selected travel services for said customer.

13. A method of packaging travel services for a customer, comprising the steps of:

communicating with a plurality of travel service providers,
wherein each of said plurality of providers is associated with one or
more travel service inventories;

identifying a plurality of travel services available from said travel
service inventories, wherein said plurality of travel services includes a
plurality of special fare travel services;

selecting two or more travel services from said plurality of travel
services, wherein said selected two or more travel services includes at
least one special fare travel service selected from said plurality of
special fare travel services; and

presenting said selected travel services as a travel package to
said customer.

14. A system for packaging travel services for a customer, said system
comprising:

a travel package profile including at least a plurality of data
relating to a desired travel service package;

a market place engine in communication with one or more travel
service provider inventory systems, said market place engine being
programmable to query said travel service provider inventory systems
for updated travel service provider inventory information;

a dynamic packaging engine in communication with said market
place engine and said customer preference database, said dynamic
packaging engine being programmable to select a plurality of available
travel services according to said updated travel service provider
inventory information and said plurality of data included in said travel
package profile; and

a customer interface programmable to present said selected
plurality of travel services as a package to said customer.

15. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 13, wherein:

said dynamic packaging engine is further programmable to receive an order from said customer for said selected travel services; and

said market place engine is further programmable to reserve said selected travel services on behalf of said customer.

16. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 13, further comprising:

a customer preference repository including a plurality of customer travel preferences associated with said customer;

wherein said travel package profile includes one or more of said plurality of customer travel preferences.

17. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 13, further comprising:

a marketing campaign repository including a plurality of marketing campaign parameters; and

wherein said travel package profile includes one or more of said marketing campaign parameters.

18. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 13, wherein said market place engine further comprises:

an offering repository capable of storing said travel service provider inventory information.

19. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 13, further comprising:

a market place engine interface programmable to facilitate communication between said market place engine and said dynamic packaging engine.

20. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 14, wherein said customer interface further comprises:

a hypertext transfer protocol server capable of presenting custom web pages to said customer via the World Wide Web.

21. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 14, wherein said customer interface further comprises:

an email server capable of sending email messages to, and receiving email messages from, said customer via the Internet.

22. A system for packaging travel services for a customer, said system comprising:

an exchange means for sharing information with one or more travel service provider inventory systems to receive one or more updated inventories of available travel services;

a packaging means, in communication with said exchange means, for selecting a plurality of travel services from said inventories of available travel services, wherein said selection is based upon a travel package profile; and

a presentation means, in communication with said packaging means, for presenting said selected plurality of travel services as a package to said customer.

23. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 22, said system further comprising:

a storage means for storing a plurality of customer travel preferences associated with said customer;

wherein said package profile includes one or more of said plurality of customer travel preferences.

24. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 22, said system further comprising:

a storage means for storing a plurality of marketing campaign

parameters;

wherein said package profile includes one or more of said plurality of marketing campaign parameters.

25. A system for packaging travel services for a customer, said system comprising:

an exchange means for sharing information with one or more travel service provider inventory systems via an open-standard distributed computer network to receive one or more updated inventories of available travel services associated with one or more travel service providers;

a storage means for storing said updated inventories of available travel services;

a packaging means, in communication with said exchange means, for selecting a plurality of travel services from said inventories of available travel services, wherein said selection is based upon a package profile;

a presentation means, in communication with said packaging means, for presenting said selected plurality of travel services as a package to said customer via a TCP/IP network;

an order processing means for receiving and processing orders for said selected plurality of travel services from said customer via said TCP/IP network; and

a fulfillment means for sharing information with one or more of said travel service providers via said open-standard distributed computer network to reserve said selected plurality of travel services on behalf of said customer.

26. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 25, said system further comprising:

a plurality of customer travel preferences associated with said customer;

wherein said package profile includes one or more of said plurality of customer travel preferences.

27. A system for packaging travel services for a customer as in claim 25, said system further comprising:

a plurality of marketing campaign parameters;

wherein said package profile includes one or more of said plurality of marketing campaign parameters.